We claim:

1. An optically anisotropic sheet comprising an optically anisotropic layer formed from discotic liquid crystal molecules, an orientation layer subjected to rubbing treatment and a transparent support in this order, wherein the discotic liquid crystal molecules are so aligned that an average inclined angle of discotic planes of the discotic liquid crystal molecules is in the range of 50° to 90° and that an average direction of optical axes of the discotic liquid crystal molecules is essentially parallel to a rubbing direction of the orientation layer.

2. The optically anisotropic sheet as defined in claim 1, wherein the support has an oblong shape, and the average direction of optical axes of the discotic liquid crystal molecules is essentially parallel to a longitudinal direction of the support.

3. The optically anisotropic sheet as defined in claim 1, wherein the support has an oblong shape, and the rubbing direction of the orientation layer is essentially parallel to a longitudinal direction of the support.

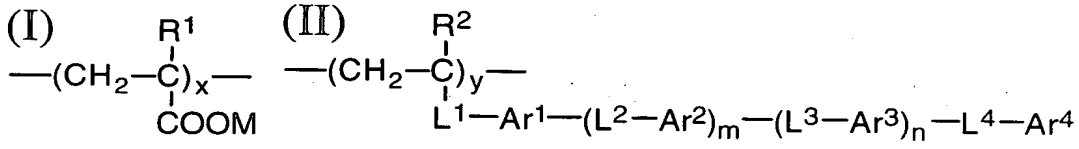
4. A rolled polarizing plate comprising an optically anisotropic layer formed from discotic liquid crystal molecules, an orientation layer subjected to rubbing treatment, a transparent support, a polarizing film and a transparent protective film in this order, wherein the discotic liquid crystal molecules are so aligned that an average inclined angle of discotic planes of the discotic liquid crystal molecules is in the range of 50° to 90° and that an average direction of optical axes of the discotic liquid crystal molecules is essentially parallel to a rubbing direction of the orientation layer.

5. The polarizing plate as defined in claim 4, wherein the average direction of optical axes of the discotic liquid crystal molecules is essentially parallel to a longitudinal direction of the plate.

6. The polarizing plate as defined in claim 4, wherein the rubbing direction of the orientation layer is essentially parallel to a longitudinal direction of the plate.

7. The polarizing plate as defined in claim 4, wherein the transparent axis of the polarizing film is essentially perpendicular to a longitudinal direction of the plate.

8. A process for orienting discotic liquid crystal molecules, comprising the steps of: coating a solution of a copolymer comprising repeating units represented by the formula (I) and repeating units represented by the formula (II) on a support to form a coated layer; rubbing a surface of the coated layer to form an orientation layer; coating a solution containing discotic liquid crystal molecules on the orientation layer to orient the discotic liquid crystal molecules so that an average inclined angle of discotic planes of the discotic liquid crystal molecules is in the range of 50° to 90° and that an average direction of optical axes of the discotic liquid crystal molecules is essentially parallel to a rubbing direction of the orientation layer:



in which each of R^1 and R^2 independently is hydrogen, a halogen atom or an alkyl group having 1 to 6 carbon atoms; M is an alkali metal ion; L^1 is a divalent linking group selected from the group consisting of -O-, -CO-, -NH-, an alkylene group and a combination thereof; each of L^2, L^3 and L^4 independently is a single bond or a divalent linking group selected from the group consisting of -O-, -CO-, -NH, $-SO_2-$, an alkylene group, an alkenylene group, an alkynylene group and a combination thereof; each of Ar^1, Ar^2, Ar^3 and Ar^4 independently is an aromatic ring, which can have a substituent group; each of m and n independently is 0 or 1; x is 10 to 95 mole %; and y is 5 to 90 mole %.

9. The process as defined in claim 8, wherein at least one of L^2, L^3 and L^4 is a single bond or an alkynylene group.

10. The process as defined in claim 9, wherein at least one of L^2, L^3 and L^4 is ethynylene.

11. The process as defined in claim 8, wherein the discotic liquid crystal molecules have polymerizable groups, and the alignment of the liquid crystal molecules is fixed by polymerization after the liquid crystal molecules are oriented.

12. The process as defined in claim 11, wherein the copolymer has polymerizable groups, and the alignment of the liquid crystal molecules is fixed by polymerization between the liquid crystal molecules and the copolymer after the liquid crystal molecules are oriented.